



April 14, 2020

To the Princeton Day School Community,

I hope the close of the recent long weekend finds you and your families well, safe, and ready to meet the challenges that likely await us all. Pleased as I am with the progress we have made in the last couple of weeks, I anticipate much more in the days ahead. As we move quickly through our third week of remote learning, I want to share news with you on three fronts: the extension of remote learning, synchronous classroom experiences, and grading policy,

### **The Extension of Remote Learning**

I have decided to extend remote learning through Friday, May 15. With two full weeks of instruction behind us and, as I will describe below, the addition of synchronous classroom experiences to our program, we are delivering a more expansive, predictable program to all of our students. Sharing this news now will enable the faculty to plan for the most effective delivery of the program and allow parents to prepare to guide and support their children. I think especially of parents of younger children, whose involvement in remote learning is essential to their children's success. While we will keep to this plan for now, should Governor Murphy decide to extend school closures beyond this date, we will follow his directive.

### **Synchronous Classroom Experiences**

As the faculty deepens its commitment to delivering program content, what they and our students crave is a return to the community of the classroom: the shared social and intellectual experience that every great classroom provides. Rich as is our asynchronous endeavor, it was not designed to replicate that community. Thus, starting later this week, all classes across the School will enhance their approach through the addition of synchronous opportunities. Classes in the Lower School will see additions to their synchronous repertoire, including a more robust presence from our Specials faculty. Those in the Middle School and Upper School are likely to see a broader expansion of the

use of Google Meet forums to supplement current program delivery. While some members of our faculty are ready to go now (and will likely do so immediately), I have asked that all members of the faculty be prepared to offer synchronous opportunities before week's end.

### **Assessments, Feedback, and Grading Policy**

This unprecedented situation compels us to develop a fair and appropriate approach to grading that is responsive to the real demands of remote learning and reflective of the vital importance of student engagement. It allows that, while we are new to remote learning, all students merit opportunities to learn, grow, and feel success and the pleasure of their efforts.

In Grades PreK-4, we will continue to offer clear, consistent feedback to students, as they develop essential competencies. The School will provide parents of lower schoolers with information about benchmarks and goals, together with recommendations for further practice. The traditional end-of-year narratives will reflect remote learning and its varied approaches to gathering information about student learning.

In Grades 5 and 6, faculty will use a broad array of assessments to gauge students' acquisition of skills and content, together with their readiness to move to the next level of study in each discipline. Here, too, faculty will provide timely, meaningful feedback designed to recognize strong performance and identify opportunities for growth and improvement.

Students in Grades 7-12 will continue with graded assignments and will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester. As is the case for their younger counterparts, students in Grades 7-12 will be graded in a manner consistent with the demands and realities of remote learning.

In advising those charged with designing a grading policy for these times, I set three goals:

- to assign semester grades in all classes;
- to ensure that no semester grade will be lower than that of the mid-term grade; and,
- to afford every student the opportunity to raise his/her grades from those of mid-term.

In evaluating student performance, faculty will employ a High Pass/Pass/Low Pass rubric, each level of which reflects student engagement, growth, and mastery. This approach recognizes the challenging circumstances in which our students find themselves; values the effort each has made

through the period ending with spring break; and seeks to focus student energy and attention to the unique, six-week learning endeavor awaiting them. As noted above, students will receive letter grades at semester's end, as none of the three designations above—High Pass/Pass/Low Pass—will be recorded on student transcripts.

As there are division-specific elements in two of these items—synchronous learning and grading policy—I have asked Sandy Wang, Renée Price, and Trixie Sabundayo to share those details with parents. You should anticipate information from each within the next week.

As we refine and sharpen Panthers Online, these three efforts—of calendar, synchronous learning, and grading policy—will afford all of our students a richer, fuller experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PJS', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul J. Stellato